

Managing an Angry Outburst

When a staff member has an angry outburst, it may disrupt workflow and impact morale. Here are some suggestions for how to address anger at work:

- 1. Consult with Human Resources and review any relevant policies.** LifeMatters is also available to discuss your concern.
- 2. Meet privately with the person to discuss the behavior.** Sample language: “I noticed that you became angry yesterday when (describe event). Could you give me your perspective on what happened?”
- 3. Allow the team member to vent.** Listen to what she or he has to say without judgment or interruption. Giving the person time to “let the fizz out of the bottle” often helps to dissipate feelings of anger.
- 4. Acknowledge that the anger and frustration may have been justified, but the outburst was not.** Sample language: “It makes sense that you would be upset by (incident). However, what you did falls outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior at work.”
- 5. Ask the person how he or she can more effectively deal with anger in the future.** Sample language: “What actions can you take to prevent an outburst from occurring again?”
- 6. Communicate expectations.** Sample language: “I expect (describe behavior) in the future. If you are feeling overwhelmed and need a few minutes, let me know and I will do what I can to give you time to gather yourself. However, if another incident occurs, (describe consequences).” Consult with HR before taking any disciplinary action.
- 7. Recommend that the team member seek assistance from LifeMatters and other company resources.** Sample language: “LifeMatters can provide suggestions for how to deal with anger. I recommend you give them a call.”
- 8. Follow up.** Check in with the individual at a later date to see how he or she is doing. In addition, consider steps that you can take to address any workflow or team morale issues that may have contributed to the person’s outburst.



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